

# League Bowler Development System

## League Benefits & Recognition



Prepared by  
The BPAA League Development Committee

## Introduction

The League Bowler Development system provides bowling center owners, operators, managers and other personnel with fast and efficient guidance on the development and retention of league bowlers.

This system will provide you with the tools and techniques necessary to meet your league goals, regardless of the season.

No matter how much or how little skill you have in league development, the guidance in this system will make you a better, more proficient and more confident bowling center owner, operator or manager.

## Why Do You Need This System Now?

In the past quarter of a century, America's appetite for entertainment has grown, expanded and become more diverse. Consumers want the latest and greatest, the newest and fastest and they want it now.

As a result of these changing lifestyles and demographic movements, the demand for league bowling participation, especially for traditional 30+ weeks has decreased, making the job of developing new and retaining existing customers even more challenging.

In an effort to get you plugged in to new and exciting ways to build leagues as well as tricks, tips and secrets, this **League Bowler Development System has been designed as a reference tool**, a tool that we believe is even more important than ever and is organized in a way that allows you to choose the topics and utilize the sections most relevant to your current business situation. You will find that the information is well organized and easy to find.

## **League Benefits and Recognition**

In this section we will cover key benefits for you to consider offering to your league bowlers (in addition to a clean environment, courteous staff, sanctioned lane conditions and a friendly smile) in order to make sure that the time they spend at your center is both valuable and meaningful.

In addition to the benefits you will be offering, it is of the utmost importance that you reward league bowlers for their achievements as a team and as individuals.

### **In This Chapter**

- ✓ The league benefit program
  - How to develop the program
  - Example benefits
  - How to market the program
  
- ✓ Multiple league incentives
  - Developing a program and its objectives
  - Identifying your multiple league bowlers
  - Marketing the incentives to the target
  
- ✓ League bowler recognition
  - Defining ways to recognize achievement
  - Example recognition programs
  - Marketing the benefit
  - How to execute the program

## ✓ **The League Benefit Program**

Many retail businesses reward their most frequent and loyal customers and the bowling industry should not be any different.

- Does your center have a program designed specifically for your league bowlers?
- Are your league bowlers aware of it? If so, how do they know about it?
- Does your staff know what the program is and can they explain it to a customer?

Almost every retail business talks about “adding value,” and giving “more benefits than the competition”, to help develop a long lasting “relationship” between his customer and his product or service. Your league bowling products are just the same. Whether it is a short season league, traditional league, every other week league, a winter or summer league, league benefits may not be the primary reason a customer joins a league at your center, but it will play a role in their decision to return.

### **Internal League Benefits**

Internal league benefits are awarded for bowling in a specific league. Some would call these benefits “premiums”. Regardless of what nomenclature you use, it is still a “benefit” or “value add”.

In order to develop “benefit leagues”, you need to have an understanding on what types of incentives would motivate people to join a league.

- Is it something they may not be able to get anywhere else?
- Is it something they can't get at the great price you are offering?
- Is it something that is trendy, contemporary, “hot” and worthwhile or can they get it without bowling at the price you are offering?
- Is it something that they think will enhance their life and if they miss it, they will feel like they REALLY missed out on a great deal?

Answering these questions will help you to lock into types of internal league benefits you should offer. When developing a league program, look for reasons to get someone to bowl. For example, develop a have-a-ball program offering the customer the opportunity to get a new, quality bowling ball at a preferential price IF he bowls in that league.

Other leagues that mimic the traditional have-a-ball league have offered such benefits as:

- Vacation leagues, including 4 days/3 nights at a resort hotel
- Casino day-trips/ bus trips for seniors to a local casino
- NASCAR jackets and tickets to a race
- A package of tickets, autographs and food vouchers to a local professional or minor league sports team
- Tickets to the circus, a concert or the theater
- Restaurant coupons
- iTunes gift cards
- Pizza and a pitcher of a beverage every night the league meets for every team or chicken wings and french fries or any other food item that hits their taste buds. Maybe you offer both and change the offering every other week. For this to be a benefit to your league bowler, the bowling, food and beverage has to be less expensive than if purchased separately.

## **External Benefits**

These are benefits EVERY league bowler gets because they are “your most frequent customer” and “your most profitable customer” and as such, your benefit package is an “enticement” for him/her to get more value than a social or casual customer.

Again, when developing these league benefits, think back on what league bowlers like. Remember that even if a benefit is not used, it has a perceived value and can impact retention as well.

**One of the most common league benefits is offering a discount on open bowling. Example benefits include:**

- \$1.00 open play games valid two to three hours before the league starts
- \$1.00 or \$2.00 off the regular price of open play games
- FREE games - this is a more popular incentive in the summer
- Gift cards for \$25 or \$50 of open play bowling.

**Exhibit 7.0 League Benefit Bowling Passes**

**SEP** **LEAGUE BOWLER APPRECIATION** **OCT**  
**FREE BOWLING**  
**ONE FREE GAME EVERY DAY DURING SEPTEMBER AND OCTOBER**



12770 SW Walker Rd • Beaverton  
 503-646-1116 • sunsetlanes.com  
 (Not valid Friday and Saturday after 6pm)

16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30
01	02	03	04	05	06	07	08	09	10	11	12	13	14	15

17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31	
01	02	03	04	05	06	07	08	09	10	11	12	13	14	15	16

**JUN** **LEAGUE BOWLER SUMMER PASS** **AUG**  
**FREE BOWLING**  
**ONE FREE GAME EVERYDAY**  
**JUNE, JULY AND AUGUST**



12770 SW Walker Rd • Beaverton  
 503-646-1116 • sunsetlanes.com  
 (Not valid Friday or Saturday after 9pm)

16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30
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17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31	
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<b>JUL</b>	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31
	01	02	03	04	05	06	07	08	09	10	11	12	13	14	15

17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31	
01	02	03	04	05	06	07	08	09	10	11	12	13	14	15	16

**Food & beverage discounts are also a common league benefit and can be offered as follows:**

- Consider offering league-only special food packages.
  - It can be a challenge to monitor this, but again, it is a benefit that the “casual bowler” cannot get.
- Promote weekly league bowler specials, such as “buy a pizza for the team and get the 2<sup>nd</sup> one at half price.”
- Offer a loyalty program that includes a league bowler rewards card, which entitles him/her to accumulate points for every purchase and then translate those points into discounts on future food items.
- **When it comes to alcoholic beverages as an incentive**, you will have to consult with your local or state Alcohol and Beverage Control (the ABC).
  - Some states will allow the discounting and promotional give-away of alcohol, but you will want to investigate your local laws.
  - The prudent thing to do is check, check and triple check with the local authorities.

**Offer Discounts tied to Birthdays.** Below are several examples to consider:

- The league bowler’s child bowls for free during his or her bowling birthday party
- Give the league bowler a \$15 gift certificate toward the overall cost of the party
- “Throw in” the party room instead of charging for it
- Provide reserved parking spots for the league bowler for the day of his/her child’s birthday party (up close and near the door!)
- Offer a discount if the league bowler has his or her adult party at your center. Perhaps a \$25 gift card when they spend over \$XX on a party. The discount can increase depending on the amount spent.
- Offer platters of free appetizers or desserts or both - they have a greater perceived value but only 30% to 34% of the cost.



## **Partner with businesses in your community**

Reach out to local businesses in your community to help promote their business by offering a special incentive to your league bowlers. For example:

- ½ price car wash
- 10% off dry cleaning
- 15% off oil change

## **Provide bowling equipment discounts**

- Give your league bowler 10% off at your pro shop or a \$25 gift certificate.
- Offer a series of intermediate or advanced bowling instructional CD's.

## **Marketing Your League Benefit Package**

After your League Benefit Program has been developed, your next step is to communicate it to current and future league bowlers. What is the benefit of bowling in a league at your center versus bowling in another center or not bowling at all?

Once you decide on your league benefit package, take the following steps:

- Meet with your staff before the new season and explain to them what you will be offering to everyone who joins a league this fall, winter or summer.
- Be sure to list your league benefits on your league flyer(s).
- Next, develop posters that have the benefits listed and get them professionally printed. See Exhibit 7.1.
- At your league officer meeting, be sure to distribute a handout so all league officers and captains can see the value you are bringing to the table, **especially if you are announcing a price increase at that time.**
- Develop a PA announcement that your customer service staff can recite when you are in “league bowler recruiting mode”.

- Develop a series of emails (Exhibit 7.2) and Facebook posts (Exhibit 7.3) that you can send out to all of last year's bowlers and dropout bowlers reminding them of the value of bowling at your center.
- **Print buttons that say: "Ask Me What LBB's Are?"**
  - **LBB = League Bowler Benefits**
  - This will force your staff to know what the benefits are and start a conversation with an existing bowler, a potential bowler and maybe even a dropout bowler.



The message is clear, communicate your league benefit package **CLEARLY AND FREQUENTLY** and always state the value of the benefits.

## Exhibit 7.1 League Rewards Benefit Poster



**AMF**

**Summer of Fun**

NO SUNBLOCK REQUIRED

**AMF**

PLEASE PRINT NAME: \_\_\_\_\_

**ENJOY MEMBER BENEFITS ALL SUMMER LONG!**  
Summer Reward discounts and offers are only valid through the dates your league is active.

**COOL BENEFITS FOR AMF SUMMER LEAGUE MEMBERS**

1. 20% discount off the posted price of all food and fountain beverage purchases (excludes alcohol)
2. Low league practice rate
3. 10% discount on birthday parties for kids and adults

*Join an* **AMF SUMMER LEAGUE** *today!*

Get out of the sun and into more fun with AMF's Summer Leagues. Enjoy exciting competition and special discounts all season long. Escape to AMF and make this summer your Summer of Fun.

Visit [AMF.com](http://AMF.com) for benefit details.

*Summer Leagues forming now for:* **YOUTH • ADULT • SENIOR**

## Exhibit 7.2 Sample Emails

It's almost here, the leaves are turning and soon millions will be returning to their local bowling centers to enjoy another league bowling season. At Happy Lanes, we have a brand new VIP league bowler benefit program that will save you money on open play games, bowling equipment, food, birthday parties, special events and even fund raisers. For more information on the VIP program and other exclusive league bowling benefits, go to [www.happylanes.com/landingpagebenefits](http://www.happylanes.com/landingpagebenefits)

Bowling is more rewarding at Happy Lanes! Be sure to visit [www.happylanes.com/landingpagebenefits](http://www.happylanes.com/landingpagebenefits) to discover all the exclusive benefits and money-saving values you get for bowling in a league at Happy Lanes this year.

## Exhibit 7.3 Sample Facebook Posts

Did you know that if you join a league at Happy Lanes and take advantage of all of our VIP league benefits, you can save over \$200. Just go to [www.happylanes.com/landingpagesavings](http://www.happylanes.com/landingpagesavings)

We love our league and club bowlers at Happy Lanes! You are always a VIP to us and here's a promise to do everything we can to make sure you will enjoy your league experience and provide you with hundreds of dollars of savings. Visit [www.happylanes.com/landingpagesavings](http://www.happylanes.com/landingpagesavings) for more information on your exclusive VIP benefits.

## ✓ **Multiple League Incentives**

In 1980, the average bowler bowled in 1.7 leagues. That means about 40% of the sanctioned bowlers in the USA bowled in 2+ leagues.

Today that number is closer to 1.1. While not all of this decline can be blamed on the lack of incentives to join two leagues, additional reasons include lifestyle changes, time-pressured families, dual income households and a host of other reasons. Many proprietors simply forgot how to “upsell.”

### **Which league bowlers are targets for an additional league?**

- **A profile of the multi-league target might be:**
  - Either a male or female
  - Advanced or skilled bowler
  - Likes to bowl for action/money
  - May want to bowl with his or her child as a way to spend some quality time with the family
  - Wants to bowl with his/her “bowling buddies”
  - Sees bowling as his primary recreational activity and considers him/herself a “bowling aficionado”, that is he/she would rather bowl than do other activities like movies, eating out, casino gambling or just staying home
  - Has lots of bowling equipment; bowls in tournaments, pot games, brackets and money shots

### **So what do you offer this person if you want to incentivize him/her to join a second league?**

- It would appear that the main motivations for this person would be:
  - Economic rewards
  - Achievement
  - Competition
  - Challenges
  - Camaraderie (spending time with their friends with whom they share a common bond) with people like themselves

**Examples of more competitive leagues** that may appeal to multiple league bowlers:

- **Create an invitational league** - only the best bowlers are invited
  - Find a sponsor or a friend who owns an insurance agency in town to guarantee a 1<sup>st</sup> place prize like \$1000.
  - This could be a scratch singles league (no handicaps) or a mixed foursome with minimum and maximum averages or a very competitive handicap system.
  
- **Create a tournament league** - bowlers compete in 4 different tournament formats every 4 weeks and then repeat again 3 more times for a 16-week season.
  - One half of the prize money is paid to the winning team each week and the remaining half would be added for each week over the 16 weeks.
  - Winners of the weekly tournament are invited back for a playoff round until a winning team is crowned.
  - Those who didn't win could buy their way into the finals tournament for a much higher price, maybe \$200 to \$400 per team.
  
- Visit [www.Bowl.com](http://www.Bowl.com) for other great tournament formats which can be run as a short season league and incentivize your current league bowler, who only bowls in one league and is motivated by money, to join an “action packed” money league which, in many cases leads to finals in places like Las Vegas or Reno.
  
- If you're still uncertain about the type of money tournament leagues you should run, grab about six or so of your high average bowlers and ask them what other kind of a league they would like to bowl in.

## **Incentivize the competitive league bowler with unlimited free open play anytime lanes are available.**

This tactic works well in the summer and frequently may encourage people that otherwise might not bowl a league during the summer.

### **Marketing Your Second League as an Incentive**

- You need a spokesman (or spokes-persons), a bowler that is not only skilled, but also has the respect of other skilled bowlers to assist you in this promotion.
  - That person could be you, your manager, one of your employees or a customer.
  - In whatever capacity this person is in, he/she becomes pivotal in talking up the league with your existing bowlers.
- Email your league bowlers, send direct mail flyers and coupons, plus inform and educate them about the league.
  - Be sure your flyer includes a call-to-action and a deadline for signing up.
  - All pertinent information about averages, team strength, prize breakdown, finals locations (if out of the area), etc. must be clearly spelled out.

Some cities have bowling newspapers. Advertising your tournament in that paper may not necessarily get your existing bowlers to join a second league, but it may get you a NEW bowler or three!



**While we have been discussing league formats to entice a customer to join a second league, it is important to note that you already have some league bowlers that participate in more than one league. It is important to have specific league benefits for your multi-league bowlers that are over and above the normal benefits.**



## ✓ League Bowler Recognition Program

As in any sport, recognizing achievement is part of the experience, and bowling is no different. The USBC has many award programs for your sanctioned leagues. For more information on USBC awards, please go to:

<http://www.bowl.com/awards>



**While you can certainly use the awards available from USBC for recognition, in order to differentiate your center from others, you should put together your own awards program to compliment what is available through USBC.**

### **Awards programs ideas for consideration**

- **Wall of Fame.** Find a wall in your center where you can list the names of bowlers who bowled:
  - High series for individual – house record
  - High series for team – house record
  - High game for individual 295 to 299
  - 300 games
  - 800 series
  
  - Use engraved metal plaques with the individual or team name listed vertically.
  
  - Use bowling pins that mount on the sidewalls with the information on the pin and the customer's name under it.
  
  - Post a list of award winners on your website and post last night's score leaders every day.
  
  - Recognize award winners through social media – Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, etc.



- **Wearables.** Shirts and jackets embroidered with the center's name and award.
- **Gift Certificates.** Restaurant (in-center or outside), fun center, \$\$\$ for open play bowling or gift certificates to a local or national department store. The type you use is up to you and your staff...and your budget!
- **Special Trophies.** Bowlers love trophies. And sometimes the bigger the better. Many centers offer 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> place trophies to all of the team members. For junior leagues, it is not unusual for ALL members to get "participation" trophies, regardless of where they finished in their league.
- **Recognition in Monthly Newsletters.** We all like to see our name in print or our face on TV so the more you can get your customers a little recognition, the happier they will be.

## Marketing Your Rewards Program

- The best way to market this program is to utilize ALL of your communication tools targeting:
  - Last year's league bowlers
  - Dropouts from the last two years
  - Potential open play bowlers inside of your center
  - Anyone on your email list or mailing list
  - Companies and organizations for whom you have hosted parties or special events
- Develop a rewards flyer for in-center use (see Exhibit 7.5) or list league bowler benefits on your league flyer, and league schedule as described in the Marketing section in this module; communicating the value of bowling at your center.

- Display the various rewards in a showcase in your customer service area, or another high traffic area, to create awareness for your league rewards program



**Lastly, don't overlook working with your USBC local representatives. Invite them to your league officer/team captain meeting to talk about any changes in rewards, awards and any process changes.**

#### **Exhibit 7.4 Sample email for Happy Lanes personal recognition program**

Do you like to get free stuff just for having fun? Sure you do! As a league bowler at Happy Lanes, you are eligible for our achievement awards program. Achievement patches are awarded to league bowlers of all ages and skill levels for high scores, improved scores and for just loving bowling. You can even earn gift certificates to local retailers for your bowling achievements! For more information visit [www.happylanes.com/VIPachievementgifts](http://www.happylanes.com/VIPachievementgifts)

Exhibit 7.5 Flyer/Poster on Happy Lanes Achievement Awards



# ne great game deserves another.

**League bowlers score FREE GAMES for bowling a GREAT GAME!**



The thrill of victory. The even bigger thrill of FREE game passes. Get any of the exceptional scores below, and we'll congratulate you with these FREE League Bowler bonus awards!

**AWARD: 3 FREE Games**

- ♦ Women's 175 game
- ♦ Men's and Women's 200 game and 500 series
- ♦ Men's and Women's 50 pins over average in 3-game series
- ♦ Men's and Women's Century Series – 100 pins over average in 3-game series
- ♦ Men's and Women's Club 55 – 55 pins over average in a single game for Club 55 members only
- ♦ Men's and Women's 225 game and 600 series

**AWARD: 6 FREE Games**

- ♦ Men's and Women's 700 series

**AWARD: 21 FREE Games and Framed Certificate of Achievement**

- ♦ Men's and Women's 300 game and 800 series

**A BOWLER MAY QUALIFY ONCE IN EACH CATEGORY PER SEASON PER LEAGUE.**

[center name]  
[center address]  
[city, state, zip]  
[center phone #]

## League Benefits & Recognition Summary

League benefits and recognition add to the overall league bowler experience and a good program can help attract and retain valuable league customers.

Now that you have reviewed this section, you should be ready to:

- ✓ Develop and promote league bowler benefits
  - Internal league benefits
  - External league benefits
- ✓ Create and market incentives to target bowlers to join multiple leagues
- ✓ Develop and promote a league achievement/recognition program